

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 890
By Cochran

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend A. J. "Warren" Ledford
for his valor as a U.S. Marine during the Battle of
Iwo Jima in the Pacific Theater in World War II.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans have continued this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the United States Marine Corps and other branches of the U.S. Armed Forces; a number of these are members of our "Greatest Generation," having served in armed combat during World War II; and

WHEREAS, one such gallant veteran is A.J. "Warren" Ledford of Carter County; born in McClure, Virginia, the son of Bryan and Daisy Ledford, Warren Ledford's family moved to Roan Mountain, Tennessee, when he was a small child; Mr. Ledford attended Cloudland High School before joining the U. S. Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the Fourth Marine Division, I Company, 23rd Regiment, Warren Ledford participated in five major invasions, Roi and Namur in the Kwajalein Atoll, Saipan and Tinian in the Marianas, and Iwo Jima; and

WHEREAS, on the morning of February 19, 1945, the Fourth and Fifth Marine Divisions were ordered to capture Mount Suribachi on the Japanese occupied island of Iwo Jima; and

WHEREAS, strategically important as a base for aircraft, the tiny volcanic island of Iwo Jima was heavily defended; in describing the island Mr. Ledford recalls, "It was only two and one-half miles wide and eight miles long. The Japanese had dug thirty miles of tunnels in that tiny space."; and

WHEREAS, in some of the fiercest fighting of the War, American forces suffered 7,000 casualties and 19,000 wounded at Iwo Jima; Mr. Ledford's 300-man Company lost 55 men, and 210 were wounded; virtually all 22,000 Japanese perished; and

WHEREAS, almost one third of all the Marines killed in World War II were killed on Iwo Jima; Mr. Warren Ledford remembers, "Every day I think of those men. I remember those who were wounded. I remember those who died. I sometimes wonder if those who were wounded survived, and how their lives were changed by not having an arm or leg. War is not pretty. It's hell. It's about the worst picture you'll ever see."; and

WHEREAS, the Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima is seared into the collective American memory; it is a sight Warren Ledford will never forget: "I remember hearing a bugler sounding 'Colors.' I turned toward the music and I saw the American flag flying from the top of Mount Suribachi. That was the most wonderful sight I believe I have ever seen. I just stood right up, took off my helmet and gave thanks to God."; and

WHEREAS, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima, Mr. Ledford recently said that he wanted to tell his story, not for himself, "but for the men who didn't make it back, for the men who came home carrying battlefield wounds and scars. I don't want us to ever forget them."; and

WHEREAS, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the Pacific Fleet during World War II, said, "Among the men who fought on Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue."; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ledford was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds he suffered on Saipan and returned home to Carter County after the War; Warren Ledford notes, "I wasn't the only one. Carter County had 5,000 men and women to serve in the military during World War II. That's a big number for a small place like this. No wonder they call Tennessee the Volunteer State."; and

WHEREAS, for forty-seven years, Warren Ledford enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife, Helen, who passed away in 1993; the couple's blessed union produced two children, twins Johnny and JoAnn; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ledford retired from manufacturing after forty-three years of service and now enjoys farming and raising cattle; and

WHEREAS, Warren Ledford is an active and devout member of Lower Shell Creek Christian Church, which he has served faithfully for many years; and

WHEREAS, A.J. "Warren" Ledford served his nation with courage and gallantry and deserves proper recognition for heroism both in the United States Marine Corps and in society today; indeed, Mr. Ledford performed his duties with the utmost skill, dedication and professionalism; his courage is unquestioned, and his service can only be categorized as outstanding; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend A.J. "Warren" Ledford of Roan Mountain, Tennessee, a member of America's "Greatest Generation," for valor, gallantry and meritorious service in the United States Marine Corps during World War II and offer our thanks for his great courage and commitment to duty during a trying and perilous time.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.